

THE STANFORD DAILY (Calif.)
7 February 1978

CIA changes to bolster public trust, Turner says

By Randy Keith

CIA Director Adm. Stansfield Turner called for a "modicum of confidence" in the American intelligence community at a speech interrupted several times by a hostile audience here last night.

Turner also confirmed that the agency maintains loose ties to the government intelligence agencies in South Africa and Iran.

Citing criticism during the last three years arising out of past intelligence agency abuses, Turner said "we are beginning to turn the corner on that criticism and the country is beginning to take a very healthy and constructive approach to intelligence."

Speaking to an overflow crowd in Kresge Auditorium, Turner said four changes have occurred at the CIA which should increase public confidence in the agency.

Turner said the CIA has changed its focus from military intelligence about the Soviet Union alone to "what's going on in the 150-some countries in the world."

He also said that the agency no longer collects just military information but has begun to gather more economic and political data from other countries.

Terming the agency's attitude toward covert political operations quite different today from its attitude when the CIA was established in 1947, Turner said covert operations are used "more judiciously than in the past."

Turner said that there are several operations underway today but downplayed them, saying they are "not that exciting."

The CIA has also begun to operate with more openness, Turner said, but he criticized recent disclosures of CIA operations by former CIA employee Frank Schnepf.

Schnepf recently wrote a book detailing the CIA's activities during the 1975 fall of Saigon and he published it without receiving CIA clearance. Clearance is required of any past or present agency employee before publication.

"There is a lack of respect for classified information in our country today," Turner said.

He said the agency is trying to "reduce the amount of classified information to a minimum," and added the agency is releasing an average of two unclassified reports per week to the public.

The agency has also seen a "revolution" in the way it collects intelligence data. Turner added those methods include using technical systems that "boggle one's imagination."

Turner said that a variety of checks have been set up in the last few years to watch over the CIA. "A very important change in the U.S. intelligence community is the process of oversight."

"We must keep some secrets and therefore we cannot have full public oversight in the U.S., but we have a surrogate oversight process."

He said this process includes the president, vice president, National Security Council, Intelligence Oversight Board and congressional committees.

"I assure you that we report much more rigorously and much more forthrightly today than ever before in our activities to these surrogate oversight bodies," he said.

Turner warned that the danger of this process was that the CIA might end up conducting "intelligence by timidity" if the close scrutiny reduced the desires of the agency to take risks.

Following his 45-minute speech, Turner was bombarded with questions while protesters walked through the auditorium.

A brief guerrilla theater was staged in which one questioner was escorted out of the auditorium by a group of protesters carrying large "I'm a CIA agent" signs.

Turner answered questions on CIA relations with government intelligence agencies in South Africa and Iran.

"We will follow the dictates of the (policies of the) United States of America, as long as the country maintains relations with those countries, we will maintain intelligence liaisons with those countries," Turner said.

"We will not in any way do things to assist them in their internal security measures in their country or in any way make agreements with them to do intelligence work inside our country."

"We merely maintain contact with those intelligence services about what happens in third areas of the world," he added.

Turner also said that the agency is undergoing a period of "rebuilding morale" following the decision to fire 820 of the agency's covert service employees.

So far, 212 of the employees have been fired, creating widespread dissatisfaction with Turner inside the agency.

Turner acknowledged that several covert operations are being conducted but said they had been cleared through the National Security Council, the president and congressional committees.